GODS CALL TO His People

To Turn unto Him;

Together with
His PROMISE to Turn unto them.

Opened and Applied in

II. SERMONS

At two Publick Faſting-dayes appointed by Authority.

By Mr. *John Davenport* B. D. and Paſtor to the Firſt Church of Chriſt at *Boſton* in *New-England.*

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Together with His Promiſe to turn unto them.

ZECH. 1. 3.

Therefore ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Turn ye unto me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and I will turn unto you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.

THe time when this Propheſie was given forth by *Zechariah* at the commandment of God, you may ſee in the firſt Verſe of this Chapter; it was *in the eighth Moneth, in the ſecond year of Darius.* In the time of the reign of *Ahaſuerus* and *Artaxerxes*, the work of building the Temple was hindred, untill the ſecond year of *Darius* King of *Perſia*, Ezra 4.24. But *Darius*, in the beginning of his reign, finding in the Records *Cyrus* his Decree for the building of the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, ſtrictly commanded that Work ſhould proceed, and that none ſhould hinder the *Jews* therein; and that their Enemies ſhould aſſiſt them, and give them all neceſſary expences out of the Kings Tribute beyond the River, &c. under a dreadful penalty, as may be ſeen

in the ſixth Chapter of *Ezra*. The event was, that *the Elders of the Jews builded, and proſpered* therein *through the propheſyings of* the Prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, Ezra 6.14. and the Work was finiſhed in the ſixth year of *Darius*, Ver. 15.

The unbelieving *Jews* in Chriſts time ſaid, *Fourty and ſix years was this Temple in building, and wilt thou rear it in three dayes?* Joh. 2. 20. For *Artaxerxes*, ſurnamed *Long-hand*, reigned fourty, or one and fourty years; in the beginning of his reign the Work ceaſed, by his Decree againſt it, till the ſecond year of *Darius*, who ſucceeded him, and it was finiſhed in the ſixth year of his reign. Chriſt ſpake of the Temple of his Body, *Joh.*2.21. and therefore their diſcourſe of the materiall Temple at *Jeruſalem*, was impertinent. Yet from the Hiſtory of thoſe times, two things may be noted:

1. That God ſometimes ſuffers the Enemies of true Religion to prevail, for the hinderance of the building of Gods Houſe, for a long time.

2. That in ſuch Times God diſcovereth in his own people a ſinful remiſneſs to neglect the publick ſervice of God, and to be too intent upon their own private concernments, and to ſatisfie themſelves with ſuch a pretence as this, We cannot help it, the Adverſaries are many and potent, and the King of *Perſia* is againſt the Work; therefore we will leave the publick work till better times, and will minde our own houſes and domeſticall affairs. But God was diſpleaſed with them, and ſhewed it by ſmiting them in their private advantages by the Fruits of the Earth, for their diſregard of his publick Worſhip, as the Lord told them by *Haggai*, Hagg. 1.4——12. and in two moneths after he ſent *Zechariah* to encourage them to go on ſtrenuouſly in the work of the Lord, that had been ſo long neglected by their fault.

In the ſecond Verſe of this Chapter he told them that God had been *ſore diſpleaſed with their fathers*; and in the 4, 5, and 6th Verſes, he tells them for what God was diſpleaſed with their fathers; and from thence infers the Exhortation in my Text, as the illative particle (*Therefore*) ſhews.

In

In the words we may note,

1. The *Command* of God to this Prophet, *Say unto them.*

2. The *Meſſage* which he muſt deliver to them, conſiſting for the Matter of it, of three parts: 1. A Precept, *Turn unto me.* 2. A Promiſe, *And I will turn unto you.* 3. A Ratification, or Confirmation of both, yet applied to each ſeverally, *Saith the Lord of Hoſts.* For Expoſition of the words.

Turn unto me] Renounce all Idols and mens Devices in my Worſhip; acknowledge me alone to be your God, and my Word to be your onely Rule, with unfeigned Repentance for your former departures from me, and diſobedience to my Word; be my people, and obſerve my Commandments: for, to cry to God for Corn, *&c.* is not a turning to God, but to the Creature, *Hoſ.*7.14. but it is to ſeek God for himſelf, when nothing will ſatisfie us beſides God himſelf to be our God, *Pſal.*144.15. and when we mourn, not ſo much for the loſs, or want of theſe things, as for Gods diſpleaſure for our ſins that have incenſed his wrath, and ſo ſeek Gods face, & reconciliation with him in Chriſt, *Pſal.*4.6,7. God doth not require this of them, as if it were in their power to do it, but to convince them that it is their duty, whereunto he would excite them by the Miniſtry of his Prophet, and would quicken and inable them by the efficacy of his Spirit accompanying the ſame.

And I will turn unto you] Gods turning to us is not like our turning to God: for, our turning to God ſuppoſeth a change in us, but Gods turning to us is *without ſhadow of turning*, Jam. 1,17. both in his Nature, *Mal.*3.6. and in his Will, *Iſa.*46.10. but it is to be underſtood in reſpect of his Effects; that is to ſay, I will be reconciled to you, and ſhew it by ſutable effects, as *Micah* 7. 19. *He will turn again, he will have compaſſion upon us.*

Saith the Lord of Hoſts] This Attribute ſhews his Abſolute dominion over all Creatures in Heaven and Earth, whom he can diſpoſe of by his command, to execute his vengeance upon thoſe that diſobey him: in this ſenſe it is added to the Precept. And to be Inſtruments of diſpenſing the effects of his favour to

thoſe that turn unto him, and obey him; in this ſenſe it is added to the Promiſe: In both it is ſuited with their condition, who had experience of the former, and upon their returning to him ſhould finde him ready to uſe his Hoſts for their good.

First, from the *Meſſage* which God commands the Prophet to deliver to them, as the Means whereby God would bring the Jews to turn unto himſelf, that it might be well with them, the Miniſtry of his Prophets, *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, note:

Doct. I. *Gods uſuall way which he will bleſs for the converting or turning of elect ſinners to himſelf, is by ſending his Miniſters with a Meſſage from himſelf to them, in their Preaching Gods Word unto them.*

From theſe words, *Say thou unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* I grant, God is able, by his Abſolute Power, to convert whom he will, and by what means he will; and that God hath in extraordinary times and caſes converted ſome to himſelf without theſe means: thus he wrought faith in *Rahab*, Heb. 11. 31. yet ordinarily he will do it only by theſe means, where they may be had. This may be cleared from Scripture in a twofold Converſion; 1. From the ſtate of ſin to the ſtate of grace, *Acts* 26.18. 2. From evil in their practice, ſo *David*; this holds in all the degrees of Converſion to God. 1. Hereby he is wont to convince men effectually of ſin, *Joh.* 16.9. and to a ſaving ſenſe of it, and remorſe for it. See this in *David*, to whom he ſent *Nathan*, 2 Sam. 12. and afterwards *Gad*, in 2 *Sam.* 24. 10. *his heart ſmote him*; how came that to paſs? ſee *Ver.* 11,12,13. And, though it is ſaid of *Manaſſeh*, 2 Chron. 33.12,13. that *when he was in affliction he beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his father, and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him*; yet the affliction of it ſelf did not turn him to God, but the principal means of his repentance, and turning to God, were *the words of the Seers that ſpake to him in the name of the Lord God of Iſrael*, as it appeareth in *Ver.* 18. So *Peters* Miniſtry, in *Acts* 2.37. Hence the Word of God

God is likened to *fire*, and to a *hammer*, Jer. 23.29. in its efficacy. 2. Hereby God is wont to bring men to Christ, and to work faith in their hearts, unto their reconciliation with God by him, *Rom.* 10.14,15. 2 *Cor.* 5.18,19. The Ministry is committed to men, but the Efficacy is from Gods Spirit, *Isa.* 57.19. *Joh.* 6. 44, 45. *Eph.* 1.13.

Reas. 1. Because the Lord will thus honour his own Ordinance. He could have converted the Eunuch immediately by his Spirit, yet he sent *Philip* to him, *Acts* 8. 29. Yea, when himself hath begun the work, yet he hath sent Ministers to them, that the work might be effected by them; as *Ananias* to *Paul*, Acts 9.11. *Peter* to *Cornelius*, Acts 10. and he ascribes to them as his Instruments, that which is his own work, 1 *Tim.* 4.16.

Reas. 2. Because the Lord will thus honour the freeness and power of his grace, in working more effectually by weaker means. The whole Scripture is breathed of God, and therefore infallible, and stamped with Gods own Authority in every sentence of it, 2 *Tim.* 3.16. and the Preaching of man is weaker in it self, and more liable to be slighted by proud men, *Jer.* 43. 2. yet God puts forth his efficacy more in the Word preached, then in the Word read, 1 *Cor.* 1.21. for *his strength is made perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. 12.9. and therefore the Apostle notes this as Gods end in this dispensation, 2 *Cor.* 4.7.

Reas. 3. Because thus the Lord will make known the efficacy of his Spirit in and with the Word preached, that the glory of turning elect sinners to himself, may be ascribed wholly to himself: hence the Ministry of the Word is called *the ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3.8. because the Spirit accompanieth that Ordinance; therefore they that disobeyed the word spoken by the former Prophets, are said to harden themselves against *the words which the Lord of Hosts sent in his Spirit* by them; *therefore there came a great wrath from the Lord of Hosts*, Zech. 7.12. So *Steven's* hearers are said to *resist the holy Ghost*, Act. 7.51. Hence the Apostle ascribes the conversion of men by the Ministry of the Gospel, onely to God, *Gal.* 2.8. *Rom.* 1.16. 1 *Cor* 3.5,6,7. 2 *Cor.* 10. 4,5. and the Heathen man converted confessed it,

1 *Cor.*

1 *Cor.*14.24,25. nor can it be aſcribed to any leſs power, if we conſider the quality of the perſons that have been converted by it: *Iſa.*11.4,6. *Wolves, Leopards, Lions:* Mat.21.31. *Publicans and Harlots:* Acts 6.7. *Sceffers,* ver. 37. open and profeſſed enemies, *Joh.*7.32,46.

Uſe 1. *for Inſtruction:* 1. That it is no eaſie thing for ſinners to turn unto God. 1. You ſee great and long-continued afflictions, of themſelves, cannot convert men: ſo the Text. The building of the Temple had been hindred above fourty years, which they ſhould have been affected with, as an effect of Gods diſpleaſure for ſome ſins yet remaining among them, and they ſhould have been provoked thereby to turn unto God: but on the contrary, they turned their thoughts to minde the building of their own houſes. Then the Lord was further diſpleaſed, and afflicted them with ſcarcity of food, by Drought and Dearth; yet they were dedolent and ſtupid, till the Lord ſent the Prophet *Haggai*, to call them to conſider their wayes, and to ſhew them for what cauſe this Judgement was upon them, and to ſtir them up to remove the Cauſe, that the Effect might ceaſe. 2. The multitude and variety of afflictions one following another ſucceſſively, cannot of themſelves turn ſinners to God, *Prov.*27.22. This we may ſee in *Pharaoh*, who though under the ſtroke of puniſhment he ſometimes confeſſed his ſin, and promiſed amendment, yet after ten plagues, remained as hard-hearted as at firſt: And in *Ahaz*, 2 *Chron.* 28.22. and in the people of *Iſrael*, Amos 4.6——12. 3. Nor can outward Mercies of themſelves work this, *Iſa.*26.10. 4. Nor can awakings of Conſcience by the ſhameful and dreadful Effects of ſin, of themſelves work this. This made *Adam* fly to hide himſelf, when he heard Gods voice walking in the garden, *Geneſ.* 3. 15. Nor can the outward Miniſtry of the Goſpel, though accompanied with Miracles, of themſelves work this: this we ſee in Chriſts hearers, *Mat.*11. 20, *to* 25. unleſs the Spirit by his divine Efficacy turn men to God, it cannot be done. See *Deut.*29.2,3,4.

2. See from whence this comes: 1. From the many Advantages

vantages and Helps that ſin hath to keep its poſſeſſion and dominion in mens hearts; as, 1. The rooted Enmity againſt God in the Nature of man, *Coloſſ.*1.21. and Cuſtome addes ſtrength thereto, *Jer.* 13. 23. and hereunto the *courſe of the world, and the working of Satan*, Eph.2.2,3. and to theſe Gods deſertion, *Pſal.*81.11,12. but above all, the love of ſin in the members, which works againſt the law of the minde, and captivates even thoſe that have a principle of grace in them. *Paul* complained of this, in *Rom.* 7.23. *I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my minde*, &c. A *Law* there ſignifies, a ſtrong compelling inclination, which forceth to its obedience, as it were by authority, 2 *Pet.*2.14. 2. It is called *the law of the members*, becauſe it inclines not by reaſon, but by naturall force, as the members of the body are moved and acted by the will. 3. It is ſaid to *war againſt the law of the minde*, to ſhew that there is a ſtrong faction of luſts againſt grace: the members are many, ſo are theſe luſts, which conſtrain to evil, and reſtrain from good.

2. Learn therefore to proportion your endeavours to the difficulty of the work. It is an evident proof that they are yet unconverted, who think its an eaſie thing to turn unto God, *Matth.*11.12. What then is to be done? 1. In ſenſe of your own inability, cry mightily unto God day and night, and leave not praying for it till the thing be attained, *Jer.*31.18. *Lam.* 5.24. *Ephraim* and the ten Tribes finding that Afflictions could not do it, pray to God to turn them; And the two Tribes found that their Captivity in *Babylon*, of it ſelf, could not do it, therefore they cry unto God that he would do it. 2. Complain unto God of the Impediments of it in your ſelves, and pray him to remove them, *Iſa.*63.17. 3. Look unto Chriſt for efficacy to be put forth upon you, in and by the Miniſtry of the Goſpel. Though the Diſciples could not caſt out the Devil out of the Childe, yet Chriſt could and did: therefore the father of him took a right courſe, when he brought his ſon that was poſſeſſed with a Devil unto Chriſt, *Mark* 9. 17, *to* 30. When luſts are too ſtrong for a man, Chriſt comes as a Prince

and overcomes them, *Acts* 5. 31. Do not reſt in your own reſolutions, but go to God in Chriſt for ſtrength, *Eph.* 3. 16, 20. where the mighty power that works in us, is the power of Chriſts Death and Reſurrection: Believe in him, and thou ſhalt overcome. 4. Improve all the wayes which God uſeth for this end, that the purpoſe of God in them may be effected; to wit, (1.) Attend his Word, in Precepts, Promiſes, Threatnings, and the impreſſions of them in thy heart at any time. (2.) His Providences, in ſome great croſs upon the commiſſion of a ſin; ſome dangerous ſickneſs, though not unto death; ſome inward terrours of Conſcience upon ſin committed; ſome evil report, or ſome judgement executed in our ſight upon another, for like ſin to yours, *Dan.* 5. 22. *Jer.* 3. 8.

Uſe 2. For *Reproof* of two ſorts of people: 1. Of ſuch as for worldly Accommodation, live in places where they have not the Word powerfully preached to them. Remember *Lot.* 2. Of ſuch as live under ſuch means, but are unprofitable and diſobedient hearers. Two things I have to ſay unto ſuch.

1. No courſe that God ordinarily takes with men will cauſe you to turn unto God, if this doth not, *Luke* 16. 31. therefore do not look at this (That you are not the better toward God after you have lived long under the Miniſtry of the Word) as a ſmall evil; for it is great in Gods account, *Heb.* 6. 8. If you be not the better, you are the worſer by it, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16.

2. Marvel not if God fruſtrate your Expectations in the fruits of the Earth, when you fruſtrate his in the fruits of the Word, *Iſa.* 5. 2. *Luke* 13. 6, 7. for God hath threatned this puniſhment againſt thoſe that diſobey his Word, *Lev.* 26. 14, 21, 23, 27. and a worſe famine then that of Bread, even of the Word, in *Amos* 8. 11, 12.

Seeondly, From the *Meſſage* it ſelf: Hence ſundry Doctrines may be obſerved.

1. From Gods ſuſpending of his promiſe of turning to ſinners, till their turning to him;

That it is in vain for any to expect Gods turning to them, that do not turn to him.

2. From

2. From the Connection of the Promiſe with the Precept;

That Gods readineſs to turn to thoſe that turn to him, ſhould mightily prevail with ſinners to turn to him.

3. From Gods promiſing to turn to them that turn to him;

That Gods being reconciled to ſinners, will infallibly follow their turning to him.

4. From Gods Attribute, *The Lord of Hoſts*, added to confirm both the Precept and Promiſe;

That if ſinners break through all impediments to turn to God, as the Lord of Hoſts, God will break through all difficulties to do them good, as the Lord of Hoſts.

From Gods ſuſpending his promiſe of turning to men, till they turn unto him, and implicitely threatning to arm all his Creatures againſt them for their hurt, if they do not turn to him; This Point of Doctrine may be gathered:

Doct. II. *That it is in vain for any ſinfull perſons to expect Gods turning to them in mercy and favour, who do not turn unto him with true repentance and reformation; but while they continue in their ſins, they muſt expect that God will come forth againſt them, as the Lord of Hoſts, commanding and ordering all his Creatures againſt them for their hurt.*

There are two parts of this Doctrine:

1. *That it is in vain for any that continue in their ſins, to expect any mercy or favour from God.*

2. *That ſuch ought to expect, that Gods wrath incenſed againſt them by their ſins and impenitency, may be executed againſt them by all and any of his Creatures, as he is the Lord of Hoſts.*

In the handling of this Doctrine, I muſt firſt ſhew what this *Turning to the Lord* implies and imports. Secondly, prove

the Doctrine, in both the parts of it ſeverally.

Firſt, *Turning to the Lord*, implies, 1. That by ſin continued in, men turn from the Lord, and againſt the Lord: as when men turn from one another in enmity, they turn their backs one to another, and their faces to oppoſite objects; ſo it is in this caſe, continuers in ſin turn from God and his Word, to Sin, and the World, and Satan, which are oppoſite to God in his holy and righteous Laws; and God turns his face and favour from them, and his wrath and indignation againſt them. Hence it is that the Lord ſaith of thoſe that diſobey the inſtructions of his word, that *they have turned the back to him, and not the face*, Jerem. 32. 33. and accordingly he threatneth them, that he will ſhew them his back, and not his face, in the day of their calamity. Thus you ſee what this turning to the Lord implies.

Secondly, This *turning to the Lord* imports two things; Repentance for, and from all their evil wayes; and Reformation of them: A hearty turning to God, through faith in Chriſt, and unfeigned love to God in Chriſt, with an univerſal conformity to his holy and righteous Rules and wayes; as they reſolved in *Iſa.* 26.13. It is true, that we cannot turn unto God of our ſelves, till he turn us unto himſelf, as you may ſee in *Deut.* 29. 2,3,4. yet, when God calleth the veſſels of mercy to turn unto him, and addeth his Promiſe for their encouragement thereunto, his Spirit in and by the promiſe, works converting grace in them: which works in them 1. Hearty prayer unto God to convert them, as *Iſai.* 63. 17. *Jerem.* 31. 18. *Lam.* 5. 31. 2. Actual Converſion to God, in anſwer to Gods calling them thereunto, *Pſal.* 27.8. as in *Jer.* 31.22. This turning to God is right,

1. When it ariſeth from right motives. The right motives of *turning to God*, are not Temporal, onely for removing of ſome temporal Affliction, whether felt or feared; or for obtaining ſome temporal good, which we want and deſire: for ſuch a turning is not to the Lord, but to our ſelves, as you may ſee in *Hoſ.* 7.16. with *Zech.* 7.5. But the right motives of *turn-*

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ing to God are Eternal, *viz.* A ſerious and fixed apprehenſion of Eternal life and death, in relation to God, and his everlaſting favour and wrath, in the incomprehenſible greatneſs and vaſtneſs of them: when theſe are not tranſient and vaniſhing, but fixed in the heart by the Spirit, and when they are looked at, not as farre off, but as preſent; *Then* they work an effectuall and preſent converſion to God. Therefore Chriſt taught his Diſciples to uſe this motive in preaching the Goſpel, for the converſion of ſinners to God, *Mark* 16.16. and Chriſt himſelf uſed the ſame motive, *Joh.*3.18,36. and the reaſon is, becauſe then a man ſeeth better and ſtronger reaſons for his turning to God, then the world can give for his continuing in ſin, 2 *Cor.* 4. 18. from love to God, *Pſal.*97.10. *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*

2. When it's done in a right manner, with the whole heart, *Joel* 2.12. that is, when a full reſolution of turning to God, follows a full illumination and conviction; otherwiſe, when men have ſome motives to turn, but not enough, they are not fully convinced, and ſo they turn but by halves, and feignedly, *Jer.* 3. 10. Hence a right *turning to God*, is deſcribed as the Effect opening mens eyes, *Acts* 26. 18. wherein is included the opening of their hearts, as in *Acts* 16.14. *Lydia.*

3. When it produceth ſutable effects: 1. That ſin, which had dominion in them, is diſpoſſeſſed, and grace is made Maſter of the houſe; ſo as though ſin gets in and dwells in them, yet it is by intruſion and uſurpation, as a Thief or Enemy, which are expelled as ſoon as they are diſcovered, and ſufficient ſtrength is gained. 2. That ſin is hated; as the Lord commanded *Iſrael* to do againſt *Amalek*, 1 Sam. 15. 3. this appears,

1. By their thruſting out the motions and luſts of ſin out of their hearts with indignation, *Iſa.* 30. 22. and ſhutting the doors of the Soul, the Eyes and Ears, againſt temptations to it. They ſay in effect, as *Ephraim* did, in *Hoſ.*14.8. *What have I to do any more with Idols?* Thus *Amnon* dealt with *Tamar*, 1 *Sam.*13.15,17.

2. By their ſeeking the utter deſtruction and full mortification of ſin: for, hatred is implacable againſt the whole kinde, as we ſee in a Wolf againſt all Sheep; nothing will ſatisfie but the death of its object, as the Lord commanded *Iſrael* to do againſt *Amalek*, 1 Sam. 15. 3.

3. By a continuall fight againſt ſin, till it be fully ſubdued. *Gal.* 5. 17. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh.* 1 Pet. 2. 11. *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which warre againſt the ſoul.* Hence they will account them their beſt friends that help them againſt ſin, their worſt enemy.

Two Reaſons of the firſt part of the Doctrine; *That it is in vain for ſinfull perſons to expect that God ſhould turn to them in mercy and favour, who do not turn to him with true repentance and reformation.*

Reaſ. 1. Becauſe continuers in ſin do fruſtrate Gods end and expectation, both in all that he doth for men, and in all that he requireth to be done by them.

For the firſt, The Church is *Gods Husbandry*, 1 Cor. 3. 9. Miniſters are the dreſſers of his Vineyard, *Luke* 13. 7. the Ordinances are his manuring of it: and is not good fruit the end of Husbandry? Therefore where this follows not, what can be expected? but, as *Iſa.* 5. 5,6,7. God ſhould *take away the hedge thereof, break down the wall thereof, and lay it waſte:* and, as *Luke* 13. 6,7. in the Parable of the Figtree, when the dreſſer of the Vineyard came *three years ſeeking fruit, and found none, Cut it down, why cumbers it the ground?* Chriſt comes in Ordinances, and Providences; To what end? *To purifie the ſons of Levi, and to purge them*: but when the Means attain not this End, ſee what follows, *Jer.* 6. 30. *Reprobate ſilver ſhall men call them.*

So for the ſecond, what God requireth to be done by his people; He requireth Reading, Hearing, Meditating, Praying, Conference, *&c.* but God regardeth not theſe performances, except the doers of them turn unto him; if they prevail not

to

to turn men to the Lord, they are but *bodily exercises, that profit little,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. In *Rom.* 2. 29. *Paul* distinguisheth *outward Circumcision,* and a *Jew outwardly,* from that which is *inward,* and concludeth, that the latter *hath praise of God,* not the former, *whose praise is onely of men,* who see onely that which is outward; but God searcheth the heart, if that he turn not unto him, the rest he regardeth not.

Reas. 2. Because God rejecteth all other grounds, whereupon men expect that God should turn unto them his face and favour in the time of their Affliction, if this their *turning unto God* be wanting; *viz.*

1. Sinfull Childrens relation to godly Parents: *Matth.* 3. 9. *Think not to say within your selves, We have Abraham to our father:* John 8. 39, *to* 45. *Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abrahams children, you would do the works of Abraham.*

2. Grown persons, (1) Professing Religion, *Psal.* 78. 34, *to* 38. (2) Covenanting with the Lord and his People, *Psal.* 50. 16, 17. Hos. 8. 1, 2, 3. *He shall come as an Eagle against the House of the Lord, because they have transgressed my Covenant,* &c.

3. Church-priviledges, *Jer.* 7. 4. *Trust not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these.* What is become of the Church of the *Jews,* and of those *seven Golden Candlesticks,* and of the Church at *Rome?*

4. Performance of Religious Duties: *Isa.* 1. 11----15. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord?* &c.

5. Extraordinary Humiliations: *Isa.* 58. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness?* &c.

Secondly, One Reason of the second part of the Doctrine; *That while they continue in sin, they must expect that God will come out against them as the Lord of Hosts,* &c.

Reas. Because continuers in sin, continue their resistance of

of God. Wherefore I may ſay to them, as *Paul* in 1 *Cor.*10. 22. *He whom you provoke to wrath is the Lord of Hoſts:* All Creatures in Heaven, Earth and Sea, are his Souldiers to fight againſt them. Angels are called *the heavenly Hoſt*, Luke 2.13. theſe are *an innumerable company of Angels*, Heb. 12. 22. and they all *excell in ſtrength:* one of them deſtroyed all the firſt-born of *Egypt* together; & one deſtroyed an hundred eighty five thouſand *Aſſyrians* in one night; *the Stars in their courſes fought* from heaven by their influences *againſt Siſera*, Judg.5.20. the Lord ſlew many of the *Amorites* with great Hail-ſtones caſt down from heaven upon them, *Joſh.* 10. 11. See what Armies the Lord imployed againſt *Egypt* in the ten Plagues, *Exod.* Chap.7,8,9,10. and againſt the *Iſraelites*, Joel 1. 3, 4. which are called *Gods great Army*, Joel 2. 25. See alſo *Amos* 4. 9. The time would fail me, if I ſhould proceed unto particular Inſtances. When God would deſtroy the old World with water, he *opened all the Fountains of the great Deep, and the windows of Heaven*, to make a Deluge, ſo that *the waters aroſe fifteen cubits upwards above the higheſt Mountains, and all fleſh died that moved upon the earth*, Geneſ.7.20,21. When he would deſtroy *Sodom* in a moment, he *Rained Hell out of Heaven*, as *Salvian* ſaid; or as *Moſes* ſaith, he *rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimſtone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and overthrew thoſe Cities, and all their Inhabitants*, Gen.19.24,25.

Uſe 1. For the furtherance of our humiliation before the Lord, and that we may juſtifie the Lords righteouſneſs in the Calamities which we have already felt, or may further fear, for our ſins are great *Iſa.*24.5. *The earth alſo is defiled under the Inhabitants thereof, becauſe they have tranſgreſſed the Laws, changed the Ordinance, and broken the everlaſting Covenant.* The Lord may ſay of us, as *Jer.*5.23,24,25. *But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart, they are revolted and gone, &c.* and our Impenitency, as *Amos* 4.7. to the end. And if he ſhould give us up to forreign Enemies, he may juſtly expoſtulate with us, as *Jer.*2.17. *Haſt thou not procured this unto thy ſelf,*

ſelf, in that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? and upbraid us, as *ver.*19. *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee: know therefore and ſee, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord God of Hoſts.* So that whatever the Lord hath done, or may yet further do againſt us, we muſt humble our ſelves, and ſay, *The Lord is righteous*, 2 Chron. 12.6. and with *Daniel*, Dan.9.7. *O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth to thee, and to us confuſion of faces, as at this day*, &c.

Uſe 2. *for Exhortation:* 1. To behold the works of the Lord, and to conſider them, *Pſal.*78.5. *Haggai* 1.7. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Conſider your wayes in your hearts.*

2. As *Law.*3.40. Search narrowly, as they did for leaven before the Paſſover, and diligently; for ſelf-love makes it hard to finde it: *Let us ſearch and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord.* Pſal.139.24. ſayes *David*, *Search me, and try me, ſee if there be any way of wickedneſs*, &c. If any way of wickedneſs be found in you, it will coſt thee thy life: A way of Envy, of evil ſpeaking, of murmuring, of earthly-mindedneſs, of ſinning ſecretly, of omiſſions, or ſlight performances of duties continued in: Take warning by what hath befallen others, to fear God. This the Lord expecteth, *Zeph.*3.6,7,8. *I have cut off the Nations, their Towers are deſolate, I have made their ſtreets waſte, that none paſſed by; their Cities are deſtroyed, ſo that there is no man, that there is none Inhabitant: I ſaid, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive inſtruction*, &c.

3. To prepare to meet God, *Amos* 4.12. by turning to him, *Hoſ.* 6.1. with true Repentance, and ſpeedy Reformation. *Jam.*4.8,9. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: Cleanſe your hands, ye ſinners, and purifie your hearts, ye double-minded: be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heavineſs.* When you have provoked the Lord to wrath by ſin, think not to take up the matter by Confeſſions, or Prayers, or Faſtings; but re-

member the Doctrine, That God requireth theſe, and *turning to him* beſides. This was the counſel of God to *Joſhua*, Joſh. 7. 10,11. Alſo we muſt have good Purpoſes and Intentions, yet theſe are not ſufficient, unleſs they produce a reall and actuall turning to God. *Deut.*5.29. *O that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments alwayes, that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever.* Natural Conſcience enlightned and awakened, and ſelf-love ſeeking a mans own preſervation and ſalvation, may work ſuch good intentions and purpoſes; but they neither continue, becauſe they ariſe from temporal motives, or ſelf-ends; nor are they effectuall, becauſe the ſubject in whom they are is irregenerate, and carnall, and therefore ſuch are his purpoſes; and *all fleſh is as graſs*, that withereth and fadeth, but 1 *Pet.*1. 23,24,25. *the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*

Laſtly, Turn from your evil wayes to God, and the Rules of his Word. This I might apply to ſundry particulars, but at preſent I ſhall ſpeak onely to one Abuſe of this ſeaſon of the Year, which is called *CHRISTMAS:* which is to be witneſſed againſt, whether it be done upon a *Religious*, or *Civil*, or *Mixed Account.*

1. If upon a *Religious Account*; None can ſanctifie Time to make a day holy to the Lord, but the ſanctifying Spirit, in and by ſome Word of God in Scripture. The Feaſts of *Purim* were Civil Feſtivals, called *Good dayes of feaſting, and ſending gifts one to another*, not *Holy times*, ſeparated from common uſes to holy. Now we no where finde warrant in Scripture for ſetting apart the day of *Chriſts Nativity* from common uſe, to religious holy uſe: Indeed the day of his Reſurrection, the *firſt day of the week*, that is by Chriſt ſanctified to be the Chriſtians *Chriſtian Sabbath:* for that was the beginning of Chriſts Exaltation, but the day of his Birth, was the beginning of his Humiliation and Abaſement; ſo that there is not a parity of reaſon between them.

2. If upon a *Civil Account*; How comes Chriſts Name to be

be uſed in it, that it is called *CHRISTMAS-DAY*? whether *Maſs* be taken in the *Saxon* ſenſe, as ſignifying a *Feaſt*; or in the Popiſh ſenſe, ſpecial Maſſes being appointed and uſed in Popery on that day, I will not now diſpute: but if in the firſt ſenſe, how is this Time abuſed by all profane, and looſe ſpirited perſons, unto Gluttony, Drunkenneſs, and miſ-ſpending of precious time, in Gaming at Cards and Dice, and other wickedneſſes? as if Chriſt was born, and given to us, to ſet mens luſts at liberty, and their perſons to ſerve ſin, and Satan; or as if Chriſtians would imitate the Pagans, in their *Bacchanalia*, and *Saturnalia*, rather then Chriſt in his temperance, and doing good.

3. If upon a *Mixed Account*; This is not the time of Chriſts Nativity: for Chriſt was not born in Winter, but rather in *September*, as I ſhall evince;

1. From *Auguſtus Cæſar*'s Taxing all the *Roman* Empire at the time when Chriſt was born, whereupon *all went to be taxed, every one to his own City*; which cauſed *Joſeph*, with *Mary* his eſpouſed Wife, to go unto *Bethlehem*, at that time when, and place where Chriſt was born, *Luke* 2. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Now the Winter had been an unfit ſeaſon for ſuch affairs and travels.

2. From the time when the Angel reported the Birth of Chriſt to the Shepherds; it was when *they were keeping watch over their flocks by night*, Luke 2. 8, 9, *to* 15. Now Shepherds watch their ſheep by night, not in the open fields, in the Winter, but in the beginning of Autumn: in the Winter they houſe them.

3. From the deſcription of Chriſts Incarnation, in *Joh.* 1. 14. *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us*: The word ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, which ſignifies, *He tabernacled among us*, alluding to the Feaſt of Tabernacles, which was on *the fifteenth day of the ſeventh Month*, Levit. 23. 24. which was a type of Chriſts Incarnation, when they were commanded to leave their filled houſes, and ſtore-houſes, and to dwell in Boothes ſeven dayes, to teach them to rejoyce, not in their worldly

abundance, but in Christ Jesus. In allusion hereunto, the conversion of the Nations to Christ, is expressed by their *keeping the Feast of Tabernacles*, in *Zech.*14.16. Lay down therefore all former vain pretences, and yield to this Truth, *That the keeping of* Christmas *in this season, is unseasonable, and in the manner as it is usually done, is unscripturall, irrationall, and unlawfull.*

We proceed to the third and last part of my Text, containing Gods Promise, *I will turn unto you*; together with the Ratification of it, *Saith the Lord of Hosts.* Whence this Doctrine may be collected:

Doct. III. *When people who have been formerly under the effects of Gods displeasure, do turn unto him with unfeigned Repentance, and Reformation of their former evil wayes, God will certainly turn unto them in mercy, and make all his Creatures serviceable for their good, as he is the Lord of Hosts.*

Two particulars must be cleared and proved;

1. *That God will certainly turn to such in mercy.*
2. *That as he is the Lord of Hosts, he will make all his Creatures serviceable for their good.*

I. That *God will certainly turn to such in mercy*; that is, he will alter the Effects of his Providences toward them, that whereas formerly they had been afflicting, now they shall be comforting, healing, restoring. Herein two things are meant;

First, That he will pardon their sins, and so remove the impediments of their good: *Jer.* 5. 24, 25. *Your iniquities have turned away things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.* See *Isa.*1. 16,18. He had exhorted them to *cease to do evil, learn to do well*, ver.16,17. And if they should object, What good shall we get by this, if our sins and miseries be so great as you have said? To prevent this, he addes, *v.* 18.

Though

Though your ſins were of the deepeſt dye, as Crimſon and Scarlet are, yet you ſhall be as perfectly cleanſed from them all, as if you ſhould ſee Scarlet become as white as Snow, or Crimſon as white as Wooll, none of the former tincture remaining. And becauſe this is a thing difficult for ſinners to believe, he addes, *Come, let us reaſon together:* as if he ſhould ſay, It will require ſtrong reaſoning to cauſe you to believe this. Therefore the Lord uſeth ſtrong Reaſons to confirm it.

Reaſ. 1. From his Eſſentiall Properties, *Exod.* 34.6,7. Obj. *But he is juſt alſo.* *A.* True; and that is for your encouragement: for Chriſt hath ſatisfied his Juſtice as your Surety, and it would not be juſt that he ſhould require the payment of one and the ſame debt twice: And he is Faithfull alſo; ſee 1 *Joh.*1.9. *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.*

Reaſ. 2. From his engagement by his Word: Therefore *David* ſaid, in *Pſal.*56.10. *In God I will praiſe his Word; in the Lord I will praiſe his Word.* Now, you may ſee how ſtrongly he is engaged by his Word, before many witneſſes: in *Micah* 7.20. *Thou wilt perform the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou haſt ſworn to our fathers from the dayes of old.* Hereupon the Apoſtle infers, *Acts* 10.43. *To him give all the Prophets witneſs, that through his Name whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins.* 1 Joh.5.9,10,11. *If we receive the Witneſs of men, the Witneſs of God is greater,* &c. *Pſal.* 119.4. *Remember thy Word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to hope.*

*Reaſ.*3. From his Fatherly Relation in Chriſt to Believers by the Covenant of grace, *Joh.* 20. 17. 2 *Cor.*6.18. he is their *Father*, and they *his ſons and daughters.* Hence he pitieth them, *Pſal.*103.13,14. and ſpareth them, *Mal.*3.17. and upon their repentance renews the manifeſtation of his Fatherly love to them, *Jer.*31.18,19,20.

*Reaſ.*4. From the Means and Inſtrument whereby forgiveneſs is purchaſed for Believers, and conveyed to them, *Epheſ.* 1.7. *Heb.* 12.24. Compare 1. The Perſons; *Abel*, a meer

man, with Christ the Mediator: there is an infinite disparity. *Acts* 20.28. God *purchased the Church with his own blood.* 2. The speaking of their Blood; there is no proportion in their value and virtue, *Heb.*9.14. 3. The thing spoken for: *Abels* blood cried for vengeance against *Cain*, whereunto God is slow; Christs blood requires forgiveness of humbled and believing sinners, wherein God delighteth, *Micah* 7. 18. and ready to it, *Psal.*86.5.

Reas. 5. From the Freeness of God herein, *Rom.* 4. 24,25. he requireth no condition, but coming to Christ, as beggars do to a free dole, without which none can receive it; and thirsting, without which none will duely prize Christ, or come unto him upon Gospel terms, *Joh.*7.37. *Rev.* 21.6. & 22. 17. and when they are come unto Christ, he poureth upon them the *Spirit of grace*, &c. Zech.12.10. and giveth *repentance and forgiveness of sin*, Acts 5.31. *Obj. But my sins are* 1. *Many*, 2. *Great*, 3. *Iterated*. *Ans.* So were the people of *Israels* sins; yet see *Ezek.*36.25. & *Zech.* 13. 1. a Fountain alwayes cleansing those that come to it.

II. *That when people who have formerly been under Gods displeasure, do turn unto him with true Repentance, and Reformation of their former evil wayes, God will remove the Effects of his displeasure, and do them good.*

Reas. 1. For his Promise sake, 2 *Chron.*7.14.

*Reas.*2. Because, the Cause being taken away, the Effect ceaseth. There is a Chain of evils, whereof Sin is the first Link, and draws on all the rest; whether Temporal punishments, as you may see at large in *Deut.*28.15, *to the end:* or Spiritual, *Rom.* 1.21,24. 1. Spiritual desertions: hence the Spirit of the Lord departed from *Saul*, 1 Sam.16. Gods withdrawing his merciful and gracious presence from a people, brings all woes and miseries upon them, *Hos.*1.12. and sin causeth this, *Isa.* 59. 1,2. 2. Tradition, or leaving them to themselves, *Psal.* 81. 11, 12. But when sin is done away by Repentance on mans part, and forgiveness on Gods part, then will the Lord return

return to his people in mercy, and do them good, *Joel* 2. 18, 19.

Secondly, That then God will cauſe all his Creatures to ſerve for their good: 1. The Angels, *Heb.*1. 14. if they be in danger of enemies, *Pſal.*34.7. This *Jacob* found, *Gen.*32.2. and *Eliſha*, 2 Kings 6.17. And when others are ſmitten by the Angels with Warre or Peſtilence, or any other Calamities, they ſhall ſave them from the hurt thereof, *Ezek.*9.4. *Pſal.* 91.11. 2. The Sun, Moon, and Stars, *Pſal.*121.6. *Joſh.* 10. 12,13. *Judges* 5.20. 3. All Inferiour Creatures: ſee *Lev.* 26. 3, *to* 11. and *Deut.* 28. 1, *to* 9. *Joel* 2. 23, *to* 28. *Haggai* 2.18,19. *Mal.*3. 10,11,12.

Reaſ. 1. Becauſe he is the *Lord of Hoſts*, by his right of Creation and Government. As they were all made by him, ſo they are all at his diſpoſe, and under his command, for the good of his people: *The Angels do his commandments, hearkning to the voice of his word*, Pſal.103.20. So of the Hoſt of Heaven he ſaith, *I have made the earth, my hands have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded*, Iſa.45. 12. and the Meteors, Snow, Froſt, he ordereth by his Word of command, *Pſal.* 147. 15, *to* 19. So the bleſſing of the Fruits of the Earth, is by his command, *Deut.*28.8.

Reaſ. 2. Becauſe there is a Covenant between God in Chriſt, and all thoſe who thus turn unto him: As when Kings and States of divers Nations, that were before in Warre, do make a League by Covenant, all their Subjects have a free Trade and intercourſe for their mutuall good: ſo it is in this caſe; before man ſinned againſt God, all Creatures of this great Lord of Hoſts ſerved for his good: but when he ſinned againſt God, the Lord of Hoſts and all his Creatures were againſt man, had not Jeſus Chriſt, the Mediator of the New Covenant, interpoſed himſelf to reconcile humbled believing ſinners unto God. Hence, when any are brought into this Covenant, all his Creatures are at league with him, as *Eliphaz* told *Job*, Chap.5.23,24. This League ſecures them from hurt, and aſſures of good from the beaſts of the field: ſee *Hoſ.* 2. 21,22.

21,22. It is an admirable *Prosopopœia*, where the affections of men are ascribed to the Creatures; *Jezreel* looks to the fruits of the Earth, and complains of want of Wheat, and Wine, and Oil; they look to the Earth, and speak to it to receive into its bowels the Corn, as desirous to rot in it, that it might feed man; the Trees, to receive moisture from it, that they may cherish man: the Earth looks to the Heavens, with desire of Rain, and Influences from thence, that it may be fruitful; the Heavens look to God, desiring his word of Command and Blessing: and all this by virtue of the Covenant.

Use 1. For Encouragement, to those who have by their sins, and continuance in them, unto this day been under Gods displeasure, and the dreadful Effects of it, now to come in with true Repentance, and Reformation of your former evil wayes. Come unto Christ, that in him you may obtain the mercy that God offers; that now you may be reconciled to him in Christ, and receive forgiveness of all your sins past. A Proclamation of Pardon will bring Rebels in, to lay down all their Rebellions, and to become Loyal Subjects, for the time. Hear and hearken to the Lords Proclamation, in *Jer.*3.12,13. where we see, 1. That God is ready to forgive repenting sinners. Obj. 1. *The greatness of my sins affright me.* Ans. *Isa.*44.22. *I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins, &c.* Obj.2. *But our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in our sins*, Ezek.33.10,11. *Ans* Consider those two Arguments, in *Psal.*130.3,4. (1) Else none should be saved; but it is not his will that all sinners should perish, for then the blood of Christ had been shed in vain: but that cannot be, *Rev.*1.5. and the offer of Christ, for the Salvation of sinners, would be in vain: but that cannot be, *Joh.* 3. 14,15. (2.) Else none would worship him; but God will have some that shall fear and worship him, *Deut.*5.29. *Hos.*3.5. 2. God is not onely ready to receive such, but desirous of it; and there is joy in heaven at the Conversion of such, as Christ assureth us by three Parables, *Luke* 15. 7,10, *&c.* And to shew his desire, he sends his Ministers, and by them inviteth, calleth, com-

commandeth, beſeecheth ſinners to turn unto him. Ah! let it not be ſaid of any of you, as the Lord complained of others, *Hoſ.*11.2,7. 3. Conſider Examples: Chriſt in the dayes of his fleſh, welcomed Publicans and ſinners, that came to him with repentance, *Luke* 15. and his mercy is not leſs in heaven, 1 *Cor.* 6.9,10. 1 *Tim.* 1. 15, 16. onely loſe not your ſeaſon, 2 *Cor.*6.1,2. *Heb.*3.15. they that put off, may never have ſuch an offer again: for, to thoſe that believed not, in the wilderneſs, God ſware that *they ſhould not enter into his Reſt*, ver 16,18. and when they that were invited to the Wedding feaſt, came not, but put off the invitation with excuſes, the Maſter of the feaſt ſaid, *None of thoſe men that were bidden ſhall taſte of my Supper*, Luk. 14.24. Remember the ſad condition they were in, that came when the door was ſhut, *Luke* 13. 25, *to* 29.

Uſe 2. *for Inſtruction.* Learn hence, that when any Calamity is upon people, or a particular perſon, to look through it unto ſin as the cauſe of it. Look not only on the outward means, or inſtruments, or ſecondary Cauſes: that which is outward & obvious to our ſenſe, is but the Vial through which Gods wrath is poured forth. 2 *Chron.* 12.7. *David* knew that the natural cauſe of that Famine of three years in *Iſrael*, was Drought; but he reſted not there, but went to enquire of the Lord, what ſin was the cauſe of it, and received his anſwer, 2 *Sam.*21.1. This the Lord taught *Joſhua* to do, *Joſh.*7.10,11. The people of *Iſrael* learned it by long continued Afflictions, *Lam.*3.39,40.

2. Learn hence to look at ſin as the moſt miſchievous thing in the world, that you may hate and ſhun it more perfectly. When men look upon ſin abſtractively, onely as a thing done, they think it not ſo dangerous an evil as it is: therefore look at it in the effects of it, and you will ſee how miſchievous it is. If you ſhould know a man who is alwayes doing miſchief, where ever he comes, he poiſons one, ſtabs another, *&c.* and leaves every where ſome prints of his villany, how dreadfull and hatefull would he be unto you? Such a thing is Sin: it cauſed *Ahabs* death, and the dogs licked up his blood, and *Jezabels* alſo, burnt up *Nadab* and *Abihu*; cauſed the Earth to open, and ſwallow up

Corah, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*; ſtruck *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead at *Peters* feet. In a word, it blaſts the Corn, deſtroys the fruits of the Trees; brings diſeaſes on mens bodies; brings in Foreign Enemies upon people; fills the Earth with miſeries, and Hell with everlaſting torments.

3. Learn hence, that if you would have puniſhments removed in mercy, you muſt remove ſin firſt. In diſeaſes, till the Cauſe be removed, there is no Cure wrought; but if the Cauſe be done away, the ſymptomes preſently vaniſh. They take a wrong courſe, that ſet their heads, hands, feet, and friends on work to free themſelves from ſome Calamity, when the ſin remains undone away. For, 1. If the Calamity ſhould be removed, ſin not being pardoned, nor repented of, it is not removed in mercy, but in wrath: as when a Phyſician takes away his Medicines, and leaves the diſeaſe uncured, it is a ſign that either the Patients caſe is deſperate, or that the Phyſician is willing that he ſhould periſh: and if Affliction doth a man no good, it doth him much hurt; for that which doth neither good nor hurt, is in vain: but God doth nothing in vain. But if ſin be taken away, either the puniſhment will be taken away, or the ſting of it. *Obj. David found it otherwiſe*, 2 Sam. 12. *A.* Two caſes, at leaſt, muſt be excepted: 1. Of Scandal, when the Name of God is blaſphemed, *ver.* 14. 2. When a luſt is not ſufficiently cleanſed, the luſt being mortified, *Pſal.* 51. 8, 10.

4. Speedily get ſin done away; for the ſentence is gone out; as ſoon as ſin is committed, though the execution be deferred for a time, *Eccleſ.* 8. 11, 12. and the Decree is in travail before it brings forth, *Zeph.* 2. 2. and it may be ſin is not finiſhed, *Jam.* 1. 15. as *Judas*, though he was a Thief, was let alone till he had betrayed his Maſter. See *Zech.* 5. 2, 3, 8, 9. Sin may lye like a ſleeping debt, which is not demanded for many years, but if the debtor hath not an Acquittance, the Creditor may call for it when he will, and caſt him into priſon.

Uſe 3. *for Exhortation:* To be like-minded to God, *Eph.* 5. 1. You call God *Father*; be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful, eſpecially in forgiving: and Chriſt teaches us in prayer

to

to call God Father, and to beg of him forgiveneſs, and in order thereunto to forgive others that have offended us. See how Chriſt argues for this, in *Mat.* 6. 14,15. and he teaches us to urge it as an argument in our prayer, for the ſetled comfort of our forgiveneſs, *Luk.* 11.4. Obj. *But wherein muſt we follow God in this? Anſ.* 1. In his forgiving at the mediation of Chriſt, *Eph.*4.32. When a repenting ſinner comes to Chriſt, and Chriſt mediates for him, God for Chriſts ſake forgives; ſo ſhould we one that hath offended us, and is ſorry for it, and uſeth the mediation of friends, for his reconciliation to the offended party. 2. In his preventing mercy, which ſhews his readineſs to forgive, *Luk.* 15.20. *When he was a great way off, yet coming, his father had compaſſion on him, ran unto him, &c.* was more quick to pardon, then the ſon to ſeek it: ſee the effect of it in the ſon. So ſhould we, not ſtay till an offender hath come up to the height of our expectation, but encourage beginnings of repentance. 3. In not ſtanding too ſtrictly upon a full ſatisfaction, anſwerable to our imagination of the greatneſs of our wrong, which many times is above the offence, and above what we are able to convince the offender of. See that Parable in *Mat.* 18.22. *to the end.* 4. In his ending controverſies with ſinners in ſuch a way, between himſelf and them, as may keep them from publick ſhame: whence Gods forgiving, is called his *covering ſin*, Pſal. 32.1. ſo ſhould we: Therefore this is noted as the effect of love, 1 *Pet.* 4.8. See the deſcription of *Joſeph*, the reputed husband of the Virgin *Mary*, Mat. 1.19. his Juſtice made him think of putting her away, but his Love and goodneſs, to do it *privily*: the contrary is condemned in Chriſtians, that will not arbitrate matters, but go to Law, 1 *Cor.* 6.7.

Uſe 4. *for Comfort*, to repenting ſinners under Affliction: Think not that you ſhall never be freed from them, but be aſſured, that if thy heart be humbled, and thy ſin mortified, God is as willing as able to remove it. No man is in a hard condition, but he that hath an hard heart. See 1 *Pet.* 5.6. *Humble your ſelves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

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